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COMMITTEE ON THE ELIMINATION OF
DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN
Fifteenth session
15 January-2 February 1996

ADOPTION OF THE REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON THE ELIMINATION OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN ON ITS FIFTEENTH SESSION

Draft report

Rapporteur: Ms. Hanna Beate SCHÖPP-SCHILLING (Germany)

Addendum

IV. CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS SUBMITTED BY STATES PARTIES UNDER ARTICLE 18 OF THE CONVENTION

A. Introduction

1. As its fifteenth session, the Committee considered the reports submitted by eight States parties under Article 18 of the Convention: three combined initial and second reports, one combined initial, second and third report, one second report, one combined second and third report, and two third reports. The Committee also considered one report submitted on an exceptional basis.

2. As decided at its thirteenth session, the Committee prepared concluding comments on each report considered. For the status of the submission of reports by States parties, see annex ___ to the present report.

3. The Committee's concluding comments on the reports of States parties, as prepared respectively by the members of the Committee, and a summary of the introductory presentations by the representatives of the States parties are provided below. The summary records provide more detailed information on the Committee's consideration of reports of the States parties.

B. Consideration of reports

1. Initial reports

Cyprus

4. The Committee considered the initial and second periodic reports of Cyprus (CEDAW/C/CYP/1-2) at its 287th meeting, on 15 January, and at its ___ meeting, on 23 January 1996 (see CEDAW/C/SR.287).

5. In his introductory statement the representative of Cyprus reviewed progress achieved in promoting the status of women since the ratification of the Convention in 1985, taking into consideration economic, political and social changes resulting from the occupation of parts of the territory since 1974. Legal and other measures had been adopted and obstacles to implementation of the Convention have been addressed. Since the submission of the report, a new national machinery for women's rights had been set up and legislative changes in a number of areas have occurred, in particular in the areas of family law and labour legislation. Traditional and stereotyped gender ideas constituted an impediment to the full and equal participation of women in decision-making and employment, and influenced educational choices.

6. Programmes and measures had been adopted to assist women to combine family and employment. Emphasis had been given to the expansion and improvement of child-care facilities. Vocational education designed for women had been introduced.

7. Educational programmes had been revised to promote equality between men and women. Programmes for rural women had been introduced to promote their role in agriculture and encourage their participation in decision-making. Women had access to health care and infant mortality had been reduced to low levels. Maternal health care was a priority and information was available on diseases and health hazards for women.

8. The representative reported on the Government's priorities and future plans in implementing the Convention, including strengthening the national machinery for women; vocational training for women and educational and awareness-raising efforts among teachers; expansion of child care; supplementing the recently reformed family law and the remaining legal instruments that involved unequal treatment of women; improvements for rural women; prevention of violence against women; women's participation in decision-making; and possible creation of an equal opportunities commission. He stated, however, that owing to the continuing Turkish occupation of part of the territory, the Government of Cyprus was unable to ensure the enjoyment by women of their rights in the occupied part of the island.

Introduction

9. The Committee welcomed the clear reports presented by Cyprus, which contained detailed information on the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in accordance with the Committee's reporting guidelines. It expressed its appreciation, in particular,

for the frank identification of obstacles and problems and of the major policy issues of concern to women in Cyprus. The Committee also welcomed the ongoing efforts, policies and plans to eliminate discrimination against women in Cyprus and the sincere and detailed responses of the representative of the Government of Cyprus to the Committee's questions.

Factors and difficulties affecting the implementation of the Convention

10. The Committee acknowledged the State party's statement that owing to the occupation of a part of the territory of Cyprus, it could not ensure the application of the Convention in areas not under its jurisdiction.

11. The Committee noted the observation in the report that the most serious obstacles to implementation of the Convention were the social attitudes and practices based on traditional and stereotyped ideas regarding the roles of men and women.

Positive aspects

12. The Committee welcomed the report's assertion that the impact of the ratification of the Convention had been significant and that the Convention had served as a framework for government policy to reduce inequality, had helped to stimulate major changes in policy and had been a useful tool for women's organizations pressing for change.

13. The Committee commended the plans of the Government to implement the Convention in relation to equal pay for work of equal value and to expand child day-care facilities and social security for homemakers, and urged it to explore the proposal of non-governmental organizations to establish an equal opportunities commission to deal with complaints by women and to serve in a mediatory capacity.

14. The Committee welcomed the steps taken by the Government to modernize family law.

15. It commended the steps taken by the Government to subsidize efforts undertaken by enterprises to provide child care. The Committee noted with satisfaction the high level of education attained by women and girls in Cyprus and commended the educational programmes to raise awareness about traditional gender stereotypes, especially among rural women, to address health and sexual health.

16. The Committee welcomed the introduction of legislation in relation to violence against women within the family, giving full protection to the victims and imposing severe penalties upon the perpetrators, clarifying that marital rape is a criminal offence, establishing courtesy services, subsidizing a shelter created by a women's association and facilitating reporting through primary health-care providers.

17. The Committee noted with appreciation the efforts of the Government to address issues of women's discrimination in and through the electronic media.

18. The Committee welcomed the initiative to support and provide incentives to the establishment of women's agricultural collectives.

Principal areas of concern

19. The Committee noted with great concern the report of international traffic in women and of sexual exploitation of women, including women from other countries, in violation of article 6 of the Convention; it encouraged the Government to persist in its efforts to regulate the employment of foreign artists and entertainers and to prosecute criminal offenders.

20. The Committee also noted the low representation of women in the legislature and in political life, and their absence from higher levels of government. It also pointed to the exclusion of women from the military, contrary to article 7 of the Convention.

21. The Committee expressed its concern about the apparent policy of the Government to restrict women's reproductive choice, through the law on abortion, out of consideration for the low fertility rate.

Suggestions and recommendations

22. The Committee recommends that the Government take immediate action on its commitment made at the Fourth World Conference on Women to strengthen the national machinery for women, including its administrative structure, budget, human resources and legal powers.

23. The Committee recommends that the Government take steps to rectify legislation that is still discriminatory against women.

24. The Committee strongly recommends that urgent temporary measures be adopted, under article 4 of the Convention, with the aim of substantially increasing the presence of women in all areas of public and political life, as well as actively promoting their position in the senior management of the civil service and in the diplomatic service.

25. The Committee suggests that the Government extend full social security coverage to self-employed rural women and abolish existing discrimination in this respect between married and unmarried women.

26. The Committee urges the Government to explore the issue of equal pay for work of comparable value, to avail itself to existing experience in other countries and to begin campaigns to raise awareness of this issue among the social partners and women's organizations.

27. The Committee urges the Government to take into consideration all recommendations by the Committee in future reports under the Convention.

28. The Committee encourages the Government to initiate the systematic collection of gender-desegregated data in all areas of women's health.

29. The Committee urges the Government to introduce special educational programmes for all law enforcement officials and judges, including judges in family courts, for the purpose of their sensitization to matters of gender.

30. The Committee suggests that the Government of Cyprus take measures, through local and international law enforcement authorities, to combat the sexual exploitation of women in transit and make appropriate revisions of the penal code, as well as provide education, training and support to facilitate the entry of such women into the formal labour market.

31. The Committee encourages the Government of Cyprus to pursue the initiative to enact special legislation addressing the issue of sexual harassment in the work place as quickly as possible.